

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 9-11, 2020

Prepared on November 17, 2020

ITEM NUMBER:

16

SUBJECT:

Executive Officer's Report to the Board

STAFF CONTACTS:

**Matthew T. Keeling 805/549-3140,
matt.keeling@waterboards.ca.gov**

ACTION:

Information/Discussion

KEY INFORMATION This item presents a brief discussion of issues that may interest the Board. Upon request, staff can provide more detailed information about any item.

YEAR-END PERSPECTIVE AND THE ROAD AHEAD

A number of factors that are not unique to the Central Coast Region are requiring us to change how we manage our workforce to effectively address our water quality priorities.

First and foremost, our workforce is changing rapidly as Baby Boomers are retiring in large numbers. In total, eight staff retired over the last year and three more are pending in the next several months. Almost 30 percent of our workforce has less than five years of Water Board experience and our management team is in a state flux associated with promotions and rotations. The ongoing wave of retirements and acquisition of several new positions is requiring us to focus more time on hiring and onboarding staff with a racial equity component we've been implementing since earlier this year to cast a wider net encompassing a more diverse pool of candidates. In some cases, staff are retiring with limited notice, resulting in a significant brain drain and little time to transfer decades of technical and managerial experience to our up and coming staff. This is requiring us to focus more on training and mentoring new staff.

Over the last several years the types of water quality issues, discharges and number of dischargers we regulate and natural disasters we need to respond to have increased significantly, more often than not without a supporting infusion of requisite staffing resources. This requires us to triage our work on a more frequent basis and to develop more efficient strategies and tools. In response to the ever growing world of water quality issues (e.g., PFAS, HABs, trash, vegetation fuel reduction, etc.), water recycling and conjunctive use projects, and regulated entities we need to get our arms around, we've begun to focus more on the development of regulatory instruments and

supporting tools that will help us be more efficient and effective. For example, we are utilizing regional and statewide general orders to free up staff time associated with updating dozens of outdated individual permits for existing and new facilities. Instead of updating or issuing individual permits, general orders allow staff to focus on inspections and coordination with operators, enforcement, and the oversight and permitting of other facilities and new projects. We are also focused on improving the utility of statewide databases and developing new tools in coordination with State Water Board program staff to streamline order enrollment processes and manage facility information (e.g., electronic NOI and NOA forms). Efficiencies gained from tools like these will also enable us to more nimbly respond to natural disasters such as the post-fire clean-up and watershed protection coordination and rebuilding facilitation efforts that are currently underway across the state, as well as help us focus staff resources on the permitting of water supply augmentation and resiliency projects and our continued focus on high priority initiatives such as SGMA coordination, environmental justice and the human right to water, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The COVID pandemic and managing a remote workforce has only created additional challenges. Although we've adjusted to teleworking as an agency to maintain our core functions, the COVID pandemic continues to be a massively disruptive event, affecting the personal and professional lives of all of us and our staff on some level. In particular, we've been subjected to significant staffing resource reductions due to the 10% statewide furlough in response to the COVID related economic downturn, a 5% staffing redirection (three staff) for COVID contact tracing and staff on emergency Family Medical Leave Act (eFMLA) reduced time bases to care for at-home children. We've also remotely onboarded our three most recent hires. Maintaining an effective remote workforce generally requires more frequent and active engagement with staff.

These factors amount to significant and unprecedented change on multiple levels and tax our staff resources. This is an issue we are very conscious of as we address and facilitate change, making a more concerted effort to communicate with and support staff to keep them engaged and effective. Managing this change is more difficult to do with a teleworking workforce and takes time away from implementing our core regulatory and initiative work.

We are currently in the process of an office-wide prioritization and programmatic reorganizational effort to inform and support our work in the coming year while also addressing the resource constraints and challenges associated with the pandemic, ever increasing regulatory landscape, and challenges of a rapidly changing workforce. Given the significant resource constraints we are currently facing, we need to make some strategic and often difficult decisions regarding what work we focus on relative to work that is delayed or indefinitely postponed until additional resources become available.

I am proud of the successes our staff and Board have been able to accomplish and their ongoing dedication and commitment to our mission while dealing with this unprecedented level of change through the combined application of flexibility,

adaptability, and strength. Flexibility to remain nimble; adaptability to adjust and remain effective for the long-term; and strength to endure and resist negative pressures. We will remain resilient during this time of unprecedented change through the application of these three traits.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Please see the following standard attachments.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Table 1 - 401 Water Quality Certification Applications Received
2. Table 2 - 401 Water Quality Certifications Issued
3. Table 3 - Groundwater Section, Case Closure Performance Scoreboard
4. Table 4 - Groundwater Case Closures
5. Table 5 - Enrollments In General Orders/Waivers